Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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IN THIS ISSUE

Nuclear Power Goes Green

- Atomic Playbook for Kyoto
- Gore Guru Leads Charge for Nuclear Chieftains

Human Rights Is Big Business (For the Ukrainian Mafia)

- Freedom House Exec Cashes In On Award

Our Little Secret

- Another Visitor to the Lincoln Bedroom? Why *Mrs.* Lawrence Deserves to Rest At Arlington
- Bernie Sanders's Quiet Support for Suharto
- Brittain Cleared
- DreamWorks Redlines "Amistad" from Black Areas of New Haven
- Judge Conboy's Anti-Union Ties

The Second Coming:
Nuclear Power's Latest Play

Striding into Kyoto claiming to be a mighty warrior in the battle against global warming was a familiar beast, the nuclear power industry. The industry's biggest lobbyists prowled the streets and sushi bars of this ancient city (itself running on juice from an aging nuke) angling for some positive words in the treaty for their troubled enterprise. The big reactor makers were there too, dissing the oil and coal lobby, downplaying the long-term viability of natural gas and generally treating the eco-summit as an international trade show.

CounterPunch got its hands on a copy of the nuclear industry's Kyoto briefing book prepared by the Nuclear Energy Institute. The book was written by researchers at Bechtel, the giant construction firm that has built dozens of nuclear plants across the globe. It touts the latest "advanced light water nuclear reactor" as the most ecologically benign engineering feat since the solar panel and argues that the only realistic way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels in the next ten years is to bring on-line at least an additional 50 reactors. "Nuclear energy has been the largest single contributor to reduced air pollution in the world over the past 20 years," the NEI's Kyoto global warming book boasts. "And it promises to play an even greater role in the future, especially in developing countries, like India and China, which need to increase their electricity supplies to accommodate their expanding populations and economies."

The NEI book tactfully avoids the unsavory subject of radioactive waste, but does go to some lengths to argue on behalf of China's vigilance in the battle against nuclear proliferation. China, the NEI suggests, would never secretly export nuclear technology because it "has expressed strong concern over the possibility of nuclear-armed neighbors". More tellingly, the NEI warns that China "plans to standardize its nuclear generating technology, selecting one or two standardized reactor designs for future construction. If U.S. reactor manufacturers are barred from competing, China will not have the option of selecting the safest technology in the world, and the market will be permanently closed to U.S. suppliers."

With China and other Asian countries planning to build more than 70 nuclear plants in the next 25 years, the financial stakes are immense. American companies, such as GE, Westinghouse and Bechtel, desperately crave those multi-billion dollar contracts. "In theory these could all be US plants," boasted Ian Butterfield, Westinghouse's vice-president for international affairs.

The NEI's Kyoto packet includes a long list of endorsements ranging from Tom Clancy and the Vatican to Hazel O'Leary and green guru James Lovelock, inventor of the Gaia Hypothesis, who is quoted as saying, "Nuclear power has an important contribution to make". Also proudly displayed for the Kyoto conferees is a statement by Al Gore's good friend, Rep. Bob Clement, Democrat from Tennessee, who says, "With the implementation of the Clean Air Act and the administration's increased concern about global climate change and acid rain, renewed attention has been focused on nuclear energy's significant environmental benefits."

(continued on p. 5)

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Our Little Secret

That Arlington "War Hero": Cherchez La Femme

Speculation on how Clinton donor M. Larry Lawrence found a temporary resting place in Arlington National Cemetery has tended to focus on the straight cash bribe as Larry's route to proud interment in the necropolis of warrriors. Lawrence, owner of the fabled Hotel del Coronado near San Diego and one of the richest men in the country, gave upwards of $200,000 to Clinton between 1991 and 1996. The fact that in short order he became US ambassador to Switzerland and then, having died in office at age 70, was allowed to lie in a hero's grave seems to one and all a natural consequence of his political largesse, buttressed by an apparently specious claim of perilous wartime service as a merchant seaman.

However, friends of **CounterPunch** assure us that this explanation omits a more tender aspect of the affair, to wit the close friendship between President Clinton and Sheila Davis Lawrence, widow of the late ambassador. Former employees of Lawrence recall the close consultations between the President and the attractive Mrs. Lawrence whenever he happened to visit the family mansion. When both partners in a marriage have done so much for the Democratic Party, six feet of Arlington sod hardly seems too much to ask.

Nor should it be assumed that Mrs. Lawrence confined her attentions to the President. San Diegan Democrats vividly recall how Senator John Kerry, on hand in San Diego for the Clinton-Bush debate in 1992, missed part of the exchange between the candidates in favor of a private discussion with Mrs. Lawrence. His absence earned the considerable displeasure of local congresswoman Lynn Shenck, who berated him soundly when he belatedly joined the gathering.

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The Forked Tongue of Rep. B. Sanders

In early November, Bernie Sanders publicly upbraided Phil Knight, CEO of Nike. Sanders declared that "Nike travels the world in search of the cheapest possible labor and turns its back on the very people you want to buy your products." Sanders also railed at Nike's treatment of workers in its Asian factories. This outburst prompted an invitation from Knight for Sanders to journey to Indonesia to inspect personally working conditions at Nike's shoe factories.

While Sanders pondered the prospect, it came out that the Norwich University, a military academy in Northfield, Vermont, has been training 22 officers of the Indonesian military. The program is so successful that Norwich is planning to open a training center in Indonesia. Brigadier General Sudrajat, the defense attaché at the Indonesian embassy in Washington, said the officers had been sent to Norwich (tuition $14,926 a year) to "toughen them up". Next year Norwich plans to recruit officers from the Chinese military, another nation whose human rights record attracted the interests of Nike.

The Great Blusterer of Burlington has not uttered a word about this hometown connection to the abuses of Indonesian people. No doubt the good congressman was too busy trying to find a way to export low-level radioactive waste from the Green Mountain State to an improverished, largely Hispanic community in the Southwest, an enterprise that has occupied much of his time in recent months.

Low Road for Bonner: Throwing Mud at Muammar

It's as sure a bet as anything in American journalism that it will snap at any half-baked story designed to prove that Libya's Muammar Qaddaffi is a mad-dog leader of a "terror state" who should be bombed again at the first opportunity. But **Our Little Secret** finds it sad that Ray Bonner should be promoting the current wave of idiocies. After all, many years ago Bonner did good work in El Salvador before the long period of purgatorial penitence imposed on him for being too forthright in his reporting.

After a recent trip to Libya, Bonner reported excitedly in the *New York Times* that the huge and well-known irrigation project Libya has been undertaking recently is more likely a Maginot Line dug into the desert, concealing vast bunkers where Muammar can deploy everything from tanks to cannisters of chemical agents. Bonner quoted some foreign engineers working on the project as believing this to be so. After Bonner's story, other newspapers both sides of the Atlantic have siezed upon the theme.

Is there any particular reason why the US and UK intelligence services might be notably eager at this time to remind the world of Muammar's mad dog status? Yes, as a matter of fact there is. South African president Nelson Mandela paid two recent visits to Libya, thus underlining the position adopted both by the Organization of African Unity and the Arab League laid out in a submission to the U.N. Security Council in February 1997 condemning the western embargo on Libya. They, as do the Russians, call for

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normalization. There are also heavy pressures on the US and UK to allow the trial of the two Libyans to be held in a neutral venue. The Hague has been suggested. The British Locherbie families have backed that position. The US families mostly have stayed loyal to the State Department.

Brittain Prevails

More on Africa-related disinformation. A few months back we described the campaign of Western intelligence services to discredit Victoria Brittain, deputy editor of *The Guardian* of London and one of the best reporter/editors dealing with the African politics.

Brittain was the target of an extraordinary campaign of surveillance by MI5, at one point involving 24-hour surveillance and phone taps. Hostile journalists used the MI5 surveillance to suggest Brittain was in corrupt receipt of money from African leaders. A *Guardian* ombudsman issued a report on December 9 exonerating Brittain.

Of particular interest to **CounterPunch** was the apparent role of the US intelligence services. There are long-term reasons why Brittain was unpopular in such quarters, ranging as far back as the Lockheed affair in the Nixon era, where she publicized the efforts of Ernie Fitzgerald to bring the scandal to light. Brittain was the *New Statesman* correspondent at the time. And more recently the CIA had little reason to love her as she was the only journalist to write extensively about Agency attempts to overthrow the government of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana in the early 1980s. Furthermore Brittain had a public spat in 1983 in the pages of *The Guardian* when she publicly humiliated Phillip Arnold a high official in the US embassy in London who was attempting to discredit her account of US activities in Ghana.

The US intelligence listening post in Memworth Hill in western England is often used to back up British surveillance and this may well have happened in this case. These people have long memories, but failed in their attempt, backed by British rightwing journalists Paul Johnson and Stephen Glover, to do her down.

Conboy's Criminal Clients

Kenneth Conboy is the judge who ruled Ron Carey ineligible to run for re-election of the Teamsters. It turns out that while Conboy is supposed to be cleaning up the Teamsters, his law firm of Latham & Watkins is helping cover up for some of America's worst corporate criminals.

A significant part of Latham & Watkins's business involves advising health care companies on how to beat fraud charges. The company's web site proclaims that it performs "counseling and dispute work, including antitrust, fraud and abuse...We have particular expertise in criminal investigations relating to Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement". In other words, Latham & Watkins assists companies that are accused of overbilling and otherwise bilking the government.

Among Latham & Watkins' clients is white-collar crime champion Columbia/HCA Healthcare, the private hospital company. It has retained Michael Chertoff of Latham & Watkins to coordinate its defense against charges of fraud brought by the federal government – the biggest such fraud investigation in the history of US health care. Commenting upon Columbia's retainer of Chertoff, Ellen Zimiles of KMPG Peat Marwick told the *Wall Street Journal,* "Hiring Mike Chertoff is a good move because he understands what the government is looking for, and he knows how to respond to subpoenas."

Conboy's law firm is representing perhaps the most savagely anti-union firm in the health care industry.

Columbia is under siege on a variety of fronts. Three of its executives have been indicted on charges of defrauding the federal government. A former Columbia official has testified that company officers are guilty of charges ranging from overbilling to "cherry picking" clients with good health insurance. A Columbia unit in Nevada, Sunrise Medical Center, rejected a man from its emergency room after a doctor diagnosed him with "acute homelessness". The man died of pneumonia on the hospital's lawn.

Another client of Latham & Watkins's is Beverly Enterprises, the largest nursing home company in the country. Beverly is savagely anti-union and has been on the receiving end of the most extensive set of National Labor Relations Board findings on labor law violations this decade.

It's also curious that Conboy's written ruling on Carey included a bizarre footnote in which Andrew Stern, head of the Service Employees International Union, is mentioned as offering to raise $50,000 for the Teamsters. Conboy offers no evidence that Stern – whose union has been involved in bitter organizing and contract fights with both Beverly Enterprises and Columbia – ever did so.

Spielberg Blacks Out New Haven

Steven Spielberg's new movie "Amistad" is attracting favorable spin from the press, with the director himself being championed as bold and courageous for taking on a story about an early-19th century slave rebellion. The film tells how a slave ship that departed from Sierra Leone for the Caribbean was taken over by its occupants and landed in New Haven. The slaves were immediately jailed but ultimately acquitted by a local jury and returned to Sierra Leone.Today, New Haven is 40 percent black and the seventh poorest city in the US. The Amistad story is well known in the city, which has named a central square after Joseph Cinque, the leader of the slave revolt. Students in the public school system are taught about the rebellion.

Dreamworks, the film production company controlled by the courageous Spielberg, has refused to allow "Amistad" to be shown at New Haven's one downtown theater, the York Square Cinema, because it is independently owned. Instead, the company gave sole distribution rights to a chain located in the affluent, white suburbs. Despite repeated requests from New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, Dreamworks will not budge.

Dreamworks has made one concession to some inhabitants of New Haven, in the form of those who attend Yale University. Students there were offered a special sneak preview of "Amistad" early this month.■

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A License to Print Money: Mark Palmer's Rise and Rise

For getting rich these days, there's nothing like public service. Privatization, the keyword of the Nineties, is now marrying a tax exempt human rights group with taxpayers' money from a US government agency, to the great profit of a former US ambassador and another former State Department employee.

Herewith the story of Mark Palmer and Ronald Lauder. Palmer worked as a State Department officer in Europe for 27 years. He's also the vice chairman of Freedom House, a human rights outfit historically linked to a peculiarly fanatical group of cold warriors, originally mustered in Social Democrats USA. Lauder is the billionaire son of cosmetics queen Estee Lauder and former US ambassador to Austria under Ronald Reagan, a position he earned the old-fashioned way, by the disbursement of large sums of money.

Palmer's last governmental post was as the Reagan administration's ambassador to Hungary, where he promoted free market values with a series of public stunts, including serving as a judge in the Miss Hungary contest. He resigned his ambassadorship in 1990, explaining in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce that the collapse of communism was paving the way for a "gold rush" in Eastern Europe and he wanted to get on the train before it left the station.

Along with a consortium of investors led by Lauder, Palmer promptly helped form the Central European Development Corp. He was given a salary of $350,000 a year to exploit his stragetic contacts from his time at State.

The Development Corp. made investments in real estate, banking, and manufacturing. Its media spin-off Central European Media Enterprises (CME), formed in 1993, has been hugely successful. It now has a stake in 11 Eastern European television stations. CME has invested about $300 million in the region and its revenues last year hit $138 million, triple their level of three years earlier.

CME's political influence in Eastern Europe has also been growing. The company's station in Romania has supported conservative parties and is credited with playing a major role in the election of the country's first non-Communist government. A few years back, Czech politicians flocked to the black tie party that the company held to inaugurate its Prague operations. As *Institutional Investor,* which attended the affair, commented, "For winning friends – particularly politicians – you can't beat owning a TV station."

Palmer has exploited his connections in Washington as well as Eastern Europe, pressing for increased US aid to the region. Shortly after resigning in 1990, he testified before Congress that "the scale of the [aid] effort has been too small and the pace of implementation too slow."

Kuchma's Freedom Award was made amid charges that the Ukraine leased planes to the Cali cartel.

Palmer also turned to his old roosting spot, Freedom House, whose board sports such cold war cadres as Zbigniew Brezezinski and Jeane Kirkpatrick. Freedom House has ties throughout Eastern Europe – it maintains offices in Washington, New York, Kiev, Budapest and Bucharest – but is especially well-connected in the Ukraine. The group's president is Adrian Karatnycky, a Ukrainian-American and labor hawk who spent years with the AFL-CIO's international affairs division.

Freedom House specializes in the development of think tanks that are friendly to the American way. These efforts are funded to the tune of about $1 million per year from the USAID.

Back in February of 1996, Freedom House awarded the president of the Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, with its "Freedom Award" for his supposed efforts to build democracy in his homeland. The choice seemed odd since Kuchma's government has been burdened with varied chapters of corruption and assaults on political liberties. The State Department's Human Rights Report for 1996 says that Kuchma's regime has failed "to take adequate action to curb institutional corruption and abuse in the Government." Indeed, the Freedom Award was made amid highly-publicized allegations that Antonov, the Ukrainian state aircraft manufacturer, had leased planes to Columbia's Cali cocaine cartel. The man making the award on behalf of Freedom House was Palmer.

Eight months after Freedom House honored Kuchma, CME landed a lucrative deal in the Ukraine that allowed it to broadcast on Channel 2, thereby doubling its audience in Eastern Europe. In handing the station to the Palmer/Lauder team, Kuchma's government revoked a previous agreement that had authorized a firm called Perekhid Media Enterprises – owned by another US businessman, Andrew Bain – to broadcast on Channel 2 until the year 2003.

Last May, Perekhid filed a $750 million lawsuit in the New York Supreme Court charging that CME used "criminal connections and corrupt methods" to obtain its deal. The "corrupt methods" referred to are bribes. The "criminal connections" take the form of Vadim Rabinovitch, a Ukrainian who the lawsuit revealed to be Lauder's previously secret local partner in the Channel 2 deal.

Rabinovitch is typical of the new millionaires flourishing in the former Eastern bloc. He owns a private jet and a Bentley. Until 1995, Rabinovitch worked as the Ukrainian representative of Nordex Inc., a firm based in Vienna, but controlled by Russian interests. Nordex was founded in 1989, reportedly as a KGB front company. It is a trading outfit ostensibly dealing in commodities such as fertilizer, steel and oil. U.S. intelligence agencies have claimed that the firm is involved in money laundering and the shipping of nuclear components to Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Former CIA chief John Deutsch told Congress a few years ago that Nordex represents a case of "Russian criminal activity moving out of Russia".

And here's yet another odd twist in the tale. Palmer's partner Rabinovitch

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and Grigory Loutchansky, the head of Nordex, turned up at a DNC fundraiser held at the National Museum of Women in the Arts back in late-1993. Also in attendance were President Clinton, Vice President Gore and about 20 Democratic senators.

On June 27, 1995 Richard Sullivan, finance director of the Democratic National Committee, faxed Loutchansky an invitation to an intimate dinner with President Clinton at the Hays Adams Hotel. Loutchansky, then in Israel, waved the letter around while applying for a visa at the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv. By this time, though, he was on a variety of watch lists and barred from entering the country. The US embassy in Tel Aviv alerted the CIA to Loutchansky's visa request. The CIA then contacted the DNC and politely inquired if Sullivan was insane. At that point, Loutchansky's invitation was withdrawn.

The judge in *Perekhid v. CME* recently sealed all the files in the case. Whatever the outcome of the lawsuit, though, Lauder and Palmer will have done well for themselves. Lauder's initial investment of $25 million in CME is now worth close to $200 million. *The Prague Post* reported earlier this year that Palmer had sold nearly $8 million worth of shares in Nova TV, CME's Czech station, while retaining shares worth some $15 million. He subsequently resigned from CME to form Television Development Partners, which is exploring business opportunities in the Middle East and Asia. ■

(Nuke, cont. from p. 1)

Unsurprisingly, some of the more eye-grabbing numbers in the NEI's report simply don't check out. The nuclear industry claims that the world's 447 nuclear plants reduce CO2 emissions by 30 percent. But the true villain behind global warming is carbon. Existing nuclear plants save only about 5 percent of total carbon emissions, hardly much of a bargain given the costs and risks associated with nuclear power. Moreover, the nuclear lobby likes to compare its record to coal-fired plants, rather than renewables such as solar, wind, and geothermal. Even when compared to coal, nuclear power fails the test if investments are made to increase the efficient use of the existing energy supply. One recent study by the Rocky Mountain Institute found that investments in efficency could return 10 times as much carbon savings as nuclear power.

In many ways, the NEI's global warming initiative is a replay of its attempt to profit from acid rain legislation in the late 1980s, a bungled campaign that failed to attract much sympathy from legislators and seemed only to anger the public. This time, the NEI is getting a somewhat warmer reception in the White House and on the Hill.

Since 1995, nuke firms have doled out $13 million to key members of Congress.

Indeed, in the last two months the nuclear industry has scored a series of triumphs not seen since the waning days of the Reagan administration.

One reason for its renewed success may be that the NEI has been stuffing more money into campaign coffers. Since 1995 the NEI and its members have doled out $13 million in political contributions to key senate and house members, led by John Dingell ($122,700) Tom Delay ($106.500), and Dick Gephardt ($104,000).

Another reason is that the nuclear lobby has enjoyed a long and profitable relationship with both Clinton and Gore. Al Gore earned his stripes as a congressman protecting the interests of two of the nuclear industry's more problematic enterprises, the TVA and the Oak Ridge Labs. Bill Clinton backed Entergy's outrageous plan to make Arkansas ratepayers pay for cost overruns on the company's Grand Gulf reactor which provided power to electricity consumers in Louisiana.

First came the deal announced during Jiang Zemin's visit. The US would allow GE and Westinghouse to sell nuclear reactors to China, even though Zemin brazenly vowed not to abide by the so-called "full scope safeguards" spelled out in the International Atomic Energy Act. The move was apparently made over the objections of National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, who cited repeated exports by China of "dual use" technologies to Iran, Pakistan and Iraq.

A day later, Clinton signed an agreement to begin selling nuclear technology to Brazil and Argentina for the first time since 1978. (Jimmy Carter had canceled a Nixon-era deal after repeated violations of safety guidelines and nonproliferation agreements.) In a letter to congress, Clinton vouched for the South American countries, saying they had made "a definitive break with earlier ambivalent nuclear policies". Though the deal was ignored by the US press, Deputy National Security Advisor Jim Steinberg in a speech to Latin American reporters justified to the nuclear pact as "a partnership in developing clean and reliable energy supplies for the future".

During the run up to Kyoto, the nuclear industry secured another startling windfall, this time a promise of $450 million in research and development subsidies. The key man here is one of Al Gore's intellectual Svengalis, John P. Holdren. While a professor at Berkeley, Holdren portrayed himself as

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a mighty foe of nuclear weapons. His popularity among Berkeley students soared after he gave ecological backing to Carl Sagan's scary scenarios about nuclear winter. Holdren, now ensconced at Harvard, was tapped by Gore to head a task force on energy and climate policy as part of the Presidential Commission on Science and Technology. Holdren's panel was well stocked with allies of the nuclear lobby, headlined by Bechtel's Lawrence Papay and William Fulkerson, former associate director of the Oak Ridge National Lab and now at the University of Tennessee. Also on the task force was Charles Vest, president of MIT and a driving force behind the American Nuclear Society's Eagle Alliance.

Environmentalists were given two slots. One went to Daniel Lashof, a scientist at NRDC. The other was reserved for one of Lashof's biggest funders, Hal Harvey, executive director of the Energy Foundation. Last year both Lashof and Harvey supported the bail-out of the California nuclear industry.

With this roster of advisers, it's not surprising that Holdren's report largely parrots the line advanced by the NEI, calling for increased research and development subsidies for fusion and fission and the creation of a new Nuclear Energy Research Initiative to underwrite "new reactor designs with higher-efficiency, lower-cost and improved safety to compete in the global market".

Holdren's panel recommends that federal spending for research and development on commercial nuclear reactors be tripled from $40 million to $120 million, a bigger percentage increase than is recommended for either renewables or energy efficiency.

Holdren and his gang also recommend spending $330 million on fusion research, a proven waste of money in terms of energy production. Under even the most optimistic scenarios, fusion reactors will be able to generate electricity for about 50 cents per kilowatt hour, ten times more than the cost of natural gas turbines. But a boost in fusion research can go a long way toward solving a problem that has vexed the nuclear industry and the defense lobby: how to keep testing nuclear weapons technology under the restrictions of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The answer: funnel fusion energy research money to places like the Lawrence Livermore Labs and its National Ignition Facility.

The Department of Energy is not sitting by idly. Ever on the look out for any opportunity to advance the cause of nuclear power is Dr. Terry Lash, the Energy Department's director of nuclear operations. Alert **CounterPunch** readers will recall Lash as the man who has almost singlehandedly kept Hanford's Fast Flux Breeder Reactor humming along on "hot standby" until it can once again be fired up to make tritium for H-bombs.

Lash never misses an opportunity to promote nuclear power's global mission, fervently lobbying inside the DOE for nuclear trade pacts with China, Argentina and Brazil. "Lash is a shrewd and incredibly calculating operator," a senior DOE staffer tells **CounterPunch.** "He'll employ any argument for the cause of nuclear power. He pressed for sales of reactors to Brazil and China, saying that it was vital to combat the greenhouse effect."

Lash also played a key role in padding the new Clinton clean air budget proposal with a handsome handout to the nuclear industry. Sources say Lash has inserted into the budget a $30 million "clean air" subsidy to utilities laden with nuclear plants.

Longtime anti-nuke activists remember Lash from his days as a scientist for the NRDC in the 1970s, when the group touted itself as a fierce foe of nuclear power and raised millions off the Three Mile Island disaster. During his tenure there, Lash co-wrote a book for NRDC on nuclear waste. His co-author was none other than John Bryson, a co-founder of the group. Today Bryson is CEO of Edison International, which operates the San Onofre nuclear plant.

As all of this was going on, a coalition of environmental groups, spearheaded by Critical Mass Energy Project, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, drafted a letter to Clinton and Gore on the subject of nuclear power. The letter denounced the Holdren report, DOE's budget for nuclear power and all "proposals to use nuclear power to reduce greenhouse emissions". More than forty groups signed the December 4 letter. One major group refused: NRDC. ■

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